



Volume 13

Issue 4

April 2, 2008

“PURA VIDA”

by Chris Spiegl

The national motto of Costa Rica is “pura vida,” which translates as “pure life” in Spanish, but loosely denotes, “It’s all good!”

Costa Rica is an isthmus of relatively recent geologic origin with a variety of landforms created by the collision of tectonic plates. As a land bridge between North and South America, it serves as a migratory bridge for and a meeting place of many species of birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and insects.

I traveled to Costa Rica with the Toyota International Teachers Program (TITP) from February 23rd through March 8th of 2008. I applied for the TITP study tour of Costa Rica because it offered unique opportunities for travel and interdisciplinary learning with outstanding educators from the U.S. and Costa Rica. Having lived in Costa Rica years ago while training for the Peace Corps, I retained fond memories of the country’s natural beauty, friendly people, and national park system. (25% of the



Mr. Spiegl plants trees with school children in Cano Negro.

country’s landmass is in some form, protected territory.) I also wanted further exposure to environmentally sustainable agriculture and tourism projects which Costa Rica showcases internationally and which this grant promised. The 36 teachers selected for the program teach 36 different subjects and represent 22 states. They teach in rural and urban settings, private and public schools large and small, and all grade levels of middle and high school. Experience and age ranges were equally diverse. I was constantly amazed and humbled by the depth and passion of my fellow travelers. Any conversation became a workshop. In addition to this creative human font, the sites we visited and the people we spoke with were first-class examples of

ecotourism, biodiversity, native culture, and community in action. Toyota and its co-facilitators of the program, Institute of International Education (IIE), world leaders in international exchange programs, provided non-stop exposure to a variety of learning experiences. Some of the highlights were visits to La Selva, one of the world’s premier rainforest biological research stations, where I studied leaf cutter ants. My team ran nine experiments on the habits of leaf cutter ants under the forest canopy and compared our results with a similar team working in open grassland areas. One of my tasks was to paint ants with white-out and measure the time it took for marked ants to enter the nest, drop off their leaf section, and return to

continued on page 2

MR. SPIEGL GOES TO...

continued from page 1
the same

spot. (One ant died by my hand as I learned to paint a THIN white line on the traveling ants.) In another experiment, we placed a dead ant in the path of the other leafcutters and made a prediction as to what would happen. What do you think would happen? I was way off! Phorid flies come and laid eggs in the abdomen of the dead ant. Larvae of the flies will migrate to the head of the dead ant, mature there (by snacking), and eventually the ant's head will fall off. Pretty cool, huh?!?! Also sighted in La Selva were a sloth and baby, curassows, and bullet ants. These are the second largest ants in the world. Why the name? If you get stung, it feels like a bullet burning through you.

We visited EARTH University, where students from around the world study tropical

agriculture and return to their native countries as generalists in all phases of agriculture, rather than specialists in one area. Here we saw banana paper being made. Banana stalks are combined with waste paper to produce an eco-friendly product. Mrs. Pettus now has a banana paper notebook. You might ask her about it. It's 50% more slippery if you step on it than regular paper! We stayed in the shadow of Arenal volcano; the summit glowed red in the night sky. Geothermal energy from the volcano valley floor heated the hot tubs, sprinkled in tiers of colorful gardens. The zip-line tour was another highlight. Eleven different lines, some as long as $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and as high as 250 feet above the forest canopy, crisscrossed a deep valley. I can still hear the whirr of the pulley against the cable. One of my personal favorite sightings was

a click beetle with two fluorescent green spots. If you got closer, it would brighten, and as you backed off, it dimmed. It was the color of a green traffic light with the brightness of an intense LED. Interacting with Costa Rican teachers and students was an incredibly rewarding element of the study tour. We spent one night with counterparts over dinner, and many common themes applied to us as teachers and human beings. The love of the profession and the challenges we face came through despite language differences. Students at the high school talked of teen pregnancy, drug use, job prospects, and careers after high school. In the middle school, I sat next to a young man who was obviously distracted from the French lesson. When the teacher wasn't looking, he showed me his Yu-Gi-Oh cards. Planting trees with the elementary school



Look closely for the leaf cutter ants.



Mr. Spiegel teaches a lesson with his Costa Rican counterpart.

COSTA RICA!

children to create a shady bank in the Cano Negro wildlife reserve helped me connect in a deep way with community based, environment-sustaining preservation of resources to share with future generations.

I hope this article is the first of many efforts on my part to share the experience with others and apply what I learned towards growing this ideal locally. Special thanks are due to Nathan Lujan, MBA class of '95, for doing such a great job with the ES classes in my absence, and to Mr. Gioia, Mr. Thurmond, and the 8th grade for giving me the chance to pursue this memorable time away. AND, thanks to Mrs. Pettus for the camera and all of her support in letting me get this article into TOH!

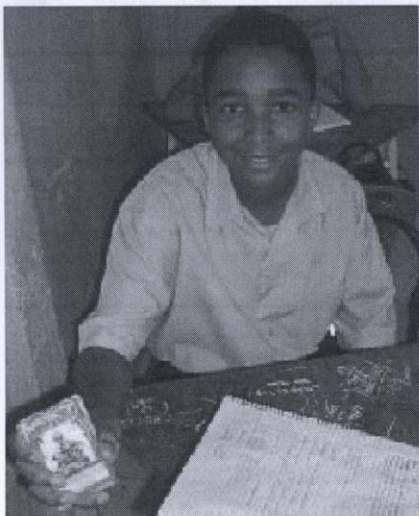
PS: Slide shows are in the works! I shot hundreds of pics and movies.



Mr. Spiegl flies over the Costa Rican countryside.



A crazy band entertained at the teacher party.



A middle-schooler and his Yu-Gi-Oh cards



Arenal volcano in the afternoon sun

ON THE HILL

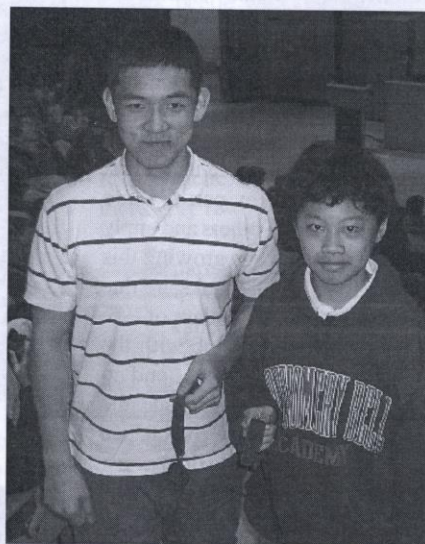
The Junior School Science Olympiad Team finished 4th in the region and advances to the state, held in April at MTSU.



Joe Scherrer, Hamilton Millwee, Falkner Werkhaven, and Nathan Fouts



Falkner and Joe

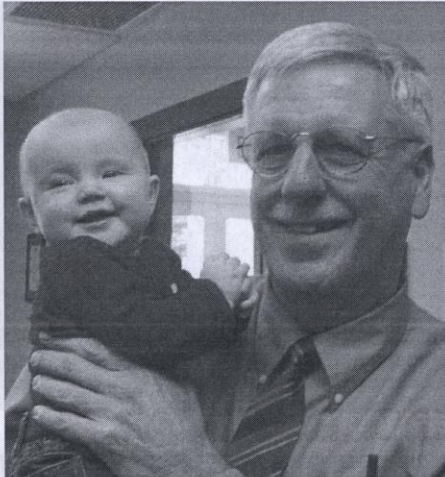


Zach Chen and Tom Bu

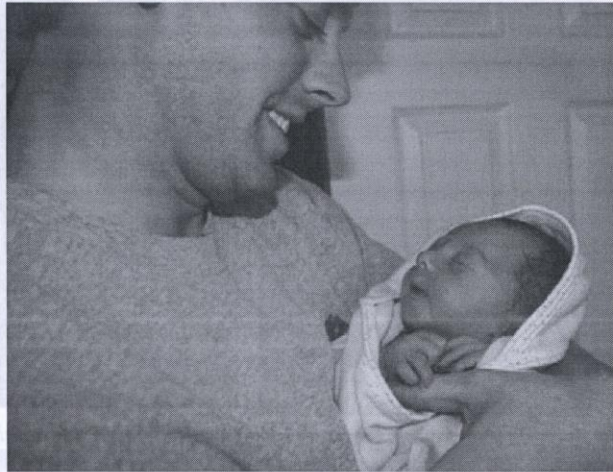


Bryan Oslin and Falkner

ON THE HILL



Grandpa Woolsey and Grace



Mr. Brock and son Luke

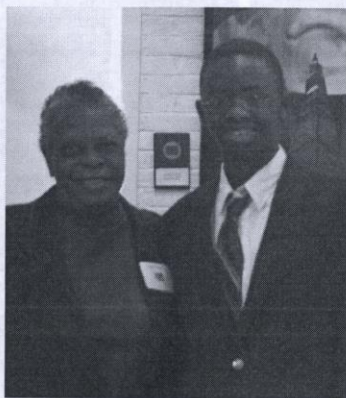


During spring break, the MBA Mathcounts team won the State competition for the fifth time since 2003. Andrew Cho (4th place) qualified to compete in the national competition in Denver, Colorado, in May. The other three team members are Hunter Tidwell (6th place), Tom Bu (8th place), and Zachery Chen (12th place). Congratulations to Mrs. Qian and her team.

GRANDPARENTS DAY



Eric Walsh and Mildred Coode



Annie Bratton and Paul Moore



Wanda Martin and Sam Martin



Rett Hooper with Nancy and Hale Hooper



Jack Wagster with Linda and John Wagster

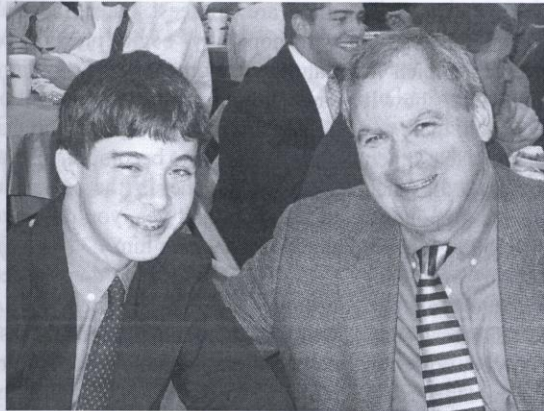


*Jonathan Siktberg, Bill Sherman,
Jamie Tillman, and Ryan Owen*



*Aaron Ardisson with Anne
Clingman and Marilyn Ardisson*

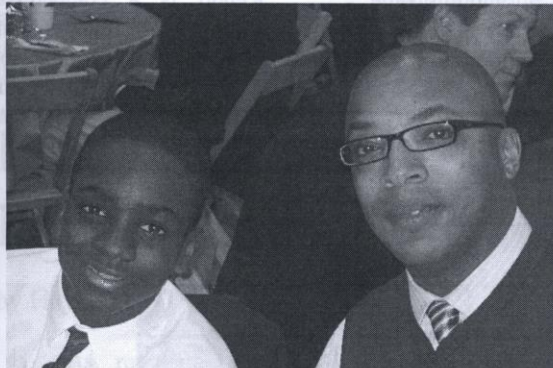
FATHER-SON DINNER



Joe and Paul Barry



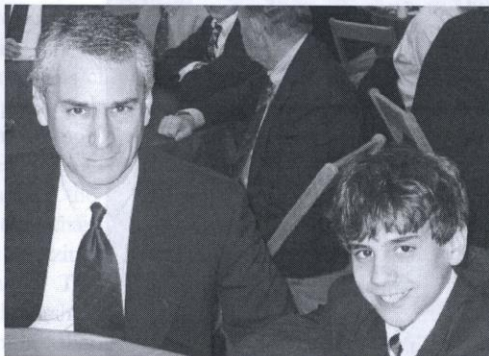
Vaughn and Jim Hunt



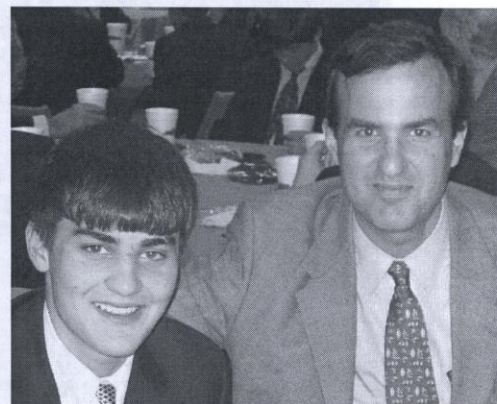
Anthony Birdsong and Marcus Piggee



John and Joe Wheeler



Larry and Robert Papel



Augie and John Houghton

FEATURES

The Kendo Club

by Aiden Davis

This year, MBA has formed a new club--the Kendo Club. Many people may not realize that Kendo is a very serious and competitive sport. It is also one of the hardest sports to master. Kendo demands all of your speed and strength while you perform the difficult maneuvers. It is not just physical; Kendo also requires intelligence and alertness. The more moves you plan ahead of your opponent, the more advantage you have.

Kendo literally means "the way of the sword." It is an art of

discipline and focus. It is about waiting for the *Ki Ken Tai Ichi*, or the perfect moment with which to strike your opponent. Here's how it works: In a regular match, there are two opponents facing each other, each holding a *shinai* (sword). When the match begins, the opponents attempt to strike the other's head, throat, torso, neck, or wrist. For each hit, you accumulate one point. The best two out of three wins. Points are only rewarded, however, to those who demonstrate the proper form while striking. If your form is at all imperfect during this time, your strike will not be counted.

The MBA Kendo Club meets every Wednesday during break in the front parking lot outside the gym and the workout room. All required gear is supplied, and currently

there are no fees! Later, the club will hopefully begin practice on Saturdays from 9-12. Dr. Marro says: "It is my hope that we will be able to drum up enough support that we will be able to become an official sport." (Yes, he is the instructor of the club, and yes, you do get to practice whacking him.)

If MBA Kendo does indeed become an official sport, MBA will begin competition. These competitions are nationwide and are tremendous travel opportunities for those who are interested.

Kendo is a competitive, highly difficult sport. It is free, fun-for-all-ages, and won't take too much of your time. So drop by this next practice. You've got nothing to lose!



Dr. Marro gives instruction on "the way of the sword."

FEATURES

Are Our E-mails Really "First Class"?

by Andrew Cho

I am sure that many of you have at least one experience of sending First Class e-mails that are either inappropriate, silly, or self-incriminating. You might have sent the e-mail thinking that no one except

the receiver would see it. Well, if this is the case, you were lucky. A lot of Junior School students don't seem to know (and I didn't know this until a few weeks ago) that our e-mails can be checked by our "vaccine," Mr. Thurmond. The point I am trying to make here is not that Mr. Thurmond should not ever view our emails; rather, we should stop sending unnecessary and ridiculous e-mails through our First Class accounts. I mean how much more ridiculous can e-mails like "You're gay," "I will physically dominate you," or "Your mom..." be? (YES, these are actual e-mails. I asked my friends for the most ridiculous e-mails that they have received recently).

These clear examples indicate that most of us are not always using our "privilege" properly. It is my hope that you will consider the necessity and appropriateness of your e-mails before sending them out to other classmates who might, unlike you had expected, find your e-mails silly and self-incriminating.

REMINDER:
Wednesday, April 9,
is the deadline for
submitting entries
to the creative
writing contests.

Dolphin Follow-Up

by Hayden Holliman

As reported in the last issue of *Top of the Hill*, Mr. McMurray's homeroom had an extremely successful bakesale, raising six-hundred dollars! Our charity was chosen to be the non-for-profit dolphin assisted therapy organization, Island Dolphin Care. Over spring break, I personally presented the check to the director of our charity. The experience was amazing, and the director was stunned. The check will go toward a scholarship for a family, including dolphin therapy, art and other activities, access to the facilities'

research centers, a handicap accessible hotel, and a relaxing time for the whole family. Mr. McMurray recently received a letter

from the director, expressing her utmost thanks and gratitude. The money raised will no doubt help deserving children and hopefully inspire others to give as well.



Hayden
presents
\$600 to
the director
of Dolphin
Care.

ENTERTAINMENT

Noah's Movie Reviews

by Noah Fardon

Although even the best of the 2007 movies got mixed reviews from different viewers and for different reasons, the year itself showed truly great improvement from the year before, and a wonderful overall year in the quality of the films. Disregarding the ever-annoying, joke-repeating, not-funny-anymore movies written by Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer (AKA, the only people who had a sense of humor bad enough to write *Epic Movie*, and *Meet the Spartans*), the lowest standards seen in film this year were in movies that really had no hope at all in the first place. Luckily, the average audience member could tell by the not funny trailers for a comedy or not scary trailer for a horror movie, that the movie thus had no hope, saving time, and hopefully sending a message

to the writers and directors that we've had enough. Being possibly the worst film of the year, *Norbit* is a perfect example. A movie that looked extremely lousy in its trailer, and was even worse as a full-length film, *Norbit* managed, amazingly, to pick up a set of four razzies, the Oscars for terrible movies, for worst actor (Eddie Murphy), worst actress (Eddie Murphy), worst supporting actor (Eddie Murphy), and lastly worst film. As for the success stories of the year, they can be found amongst the big Hollywood movies, or even in the category of foreign, or independent films, with each category making strides towards a better audience turn-out, and a better film quality. But what the readers want to hear is what movies were really worth the time and money, so that they can tell which ones to see and which ones to avoid. So here goes:

Star Chart:

***** = Not to be missed

**** = Definitely worth seeing

** = Might want to stay away from this one

* = You'll leave and come back, just so you can leave again.

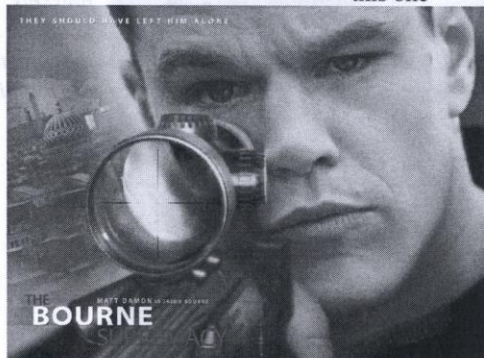
*****: *No Country For Old Men* (stay away if you have a weak stomach, or don't like blood), *There Will Be Blood* (not as enjoyable for younger movie-goers because of the slow pace), *Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, *Into the Wild*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Gone Baby Gone*.

***: *Michael Clayton*, *American Gangster*, *Juno*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Orphanage*, *The Darjeeling Limited*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Ratatouille*, *The Bucket List* (a tremendous heart warmer).

** : *Transformers*, *Spider Man 3*, *National Treasure: Book of Secrets*, *Shrek the Third*, *Beowulf*, *Blades of Glory*, *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*.

*: *Epic Movie*, *Meet the Spartans* (after 2007, but still terrible), *Alien Versus Predator 2: Requiem*, *Who's Your Caddy*, *Daddy Day Camp*, and lastly, *Norbit*.

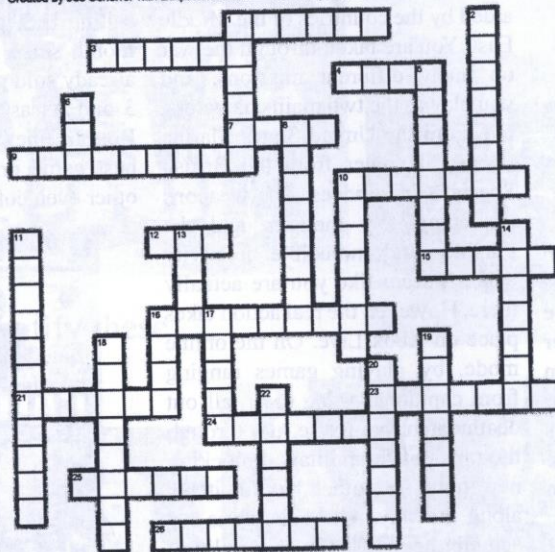
Thanks for reading, and hopefully next year will be another great year at the movies.



JOE'S CROSSWORD

Me Quiero Taco Bell

Created by Joe Scherrer with EclipseCrossword — www.eclipsecrossword.com



Across

1. Home of Football Hall of Fame
3. Sport named after a vegetable
4. Major league baseball team with the longest time since winning a World Series
7. College football star who later became US President
9. Home of first golf course in the world
10. Winter Olympic sport played with stones and brooms
12. Reason for the cancellation of the 1919 hockey Stanley Cup
15. Green Bay Packers "star"
16. First Heisman Trophy winner
21. Sports in the Winter Olympics Biathlon: Shooting and _____
23. First southern city to have a Major League Baseball team

24. Major league baseball team with the most World Series titles
25. Former name of Tennessee Titans
26. Loser of first World Series

Down

1. Loser of Super Bowl I
2. Sport that helped diplomacy with China
5. Famous baseball player who later got expelled for life: _____ Joe
6. Basketball league that used red, white, and blue basketballs
8. First black Major League baseball player
10. A period of play in a polo match
11. Home of Baseball Hall of Fame
13. Tennis word for "zero"
14. Sport where you can find a "sticky wicket"
16. Major League Baseball catcher and WWII spy
17. First name of boxers Marciano and Graziano
18. Inventor of basketball
19. First World Series played entirely west of the Mississippi began in what city?
20. Famous golf tournament in Georgia
22. Player on 1960 Ohio State NCAA champion team (later famous coach)

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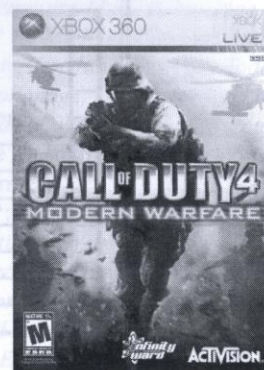
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

by Rob Edwards and Hoke Smith

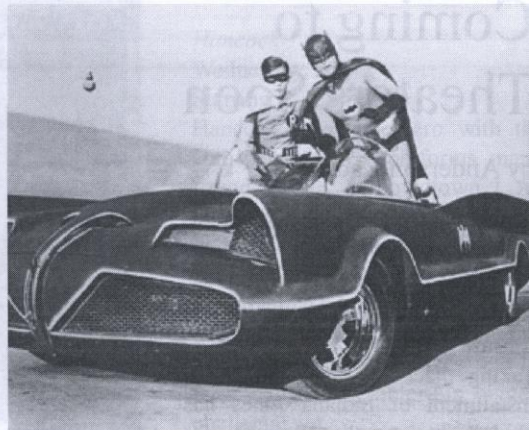
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare has, in every sense of the word, shot straight to the top of the world of video games. Whether it's the game's intense campaign mode, fast-paced online action, or just the game's incredible graphics and realistic gameplay, this game is flawless. Also, the modern day setting is a nice change from the countless number of WWII games already on the market.

The Campaign mode chronicles a fictional war between the major world powers and the Russians, aided by the countries of the Middle East. You are taken through the war on many different missions, and you play as the two main characters, one from the United States Marine Corps, the other from the British Special Air Services. The weapons are completely modern, and the graphics and incredible creativity make it seem like you are actually there. However, the real action takes place on Xbox Live. On the online mode, by playing games ranging from capture the flag to an all out deathmatch, you rise up through the ranks of the military, unlocking new guns and other helpful items along the way. All of the guns are actually being used by our military in Iraq right now, and many of the

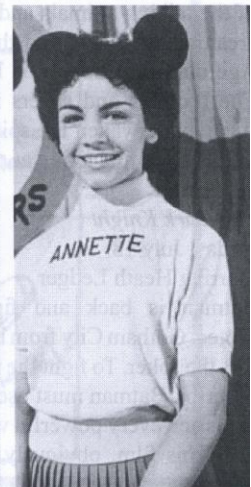
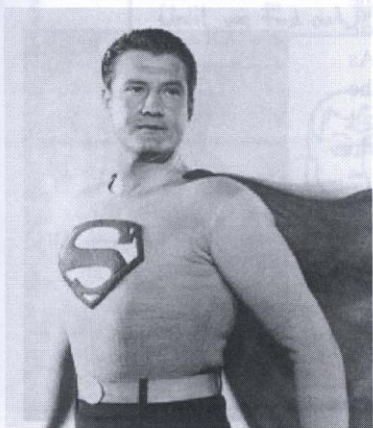
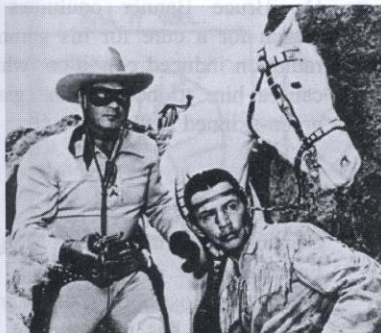
levels are modeled after real places in Russia and the Middle East. This game has held the title of best-selling U.S. game for nearly every month since its release, and it has already sold more copies than Halo 3 and Assassin's Creed combined. Bottom line: Call of Duty 4 is the best game on the market, and no other even comes close.



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Can you identify these
TV shows?



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Coming to Theaters Soon

by Anderson Rader

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

Thursday, May 22

Starring Harrison Ford and Shia LaBuff

Taking place in 1957, the fourth installment of Indiana Jones has "Indy" racing the Soviets for possession of the mythical "Crystal Skull."

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian

Friday, May 16

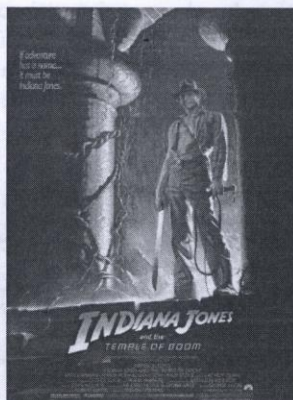
One year after leaving the wondrous land of Narnia, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy are summoned to aid Prince Caspian as he battles his evil uncle, King Miraz. Many of the talking animals and mythical creatures are gone, and the Golden Age that once thrived is long past. The brothers and sisters must find Aslan and awaken the spirits of the trees before it is too late.

The Dark Knight

Friday, July 18

Starring Heath Ledger

Batman is back and fighting to protect Gotham City from his newest foe, the Joker. To fight the new reign of terror, Batman must use all of his skills and every powerful weapon he has. This film, obviously, is Heath Ledger's last one, completed before



his recent death.

Leatherheads

Friday, April 4

Starring George Clooney

In 1925, Dodge Connolly is captain of the best team in football. Back then, football was played with one rule: "There aren't any rules." As the league begins to go under, Connolly tries to make it more popular by formalizing the rules and recruiting one of the greatest college players to his team, Carter Rutherford. As the two work to gain publicity for the sport, a sports writer named Lexie Littleton catches their attention. As pro football becomes less like the sport he loves, Connolly must fight to keep his team together and win the girl of his dreams.

Iron Man

Friday, May 2

Tony Stark is a billionaire inventor who is kidnapped and forced to build a massive missile that will be fired on the U.S. Tony uses his incredible mind and creates a high-tech suit of

armor that can fly, fire missiles, and is virtually indestructable, allowing him to escape captivity. While escaping, he uncovers a menacing plot with global implications; he swears to protect the world as Iron Man.

You Don't Mess with the Zohan

Friday, June 6

Starring Adam Sandler

A Vietnam veteran fakes his own death so he can move to New York and become a hair stylist.

The Incredible Hulk

Friday, June 13

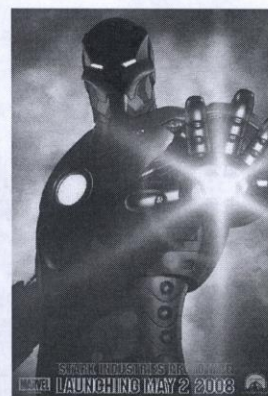
Dr. Bruce Banner continues to search for a cure for his gamma-radiation induced condition, which causes him to become the giant, green-skinned Hulk.

Wanted

Friday, June 27

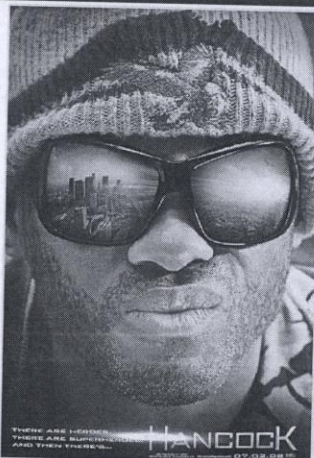
Starring Angelina Jolie and Morgan Freeman

Wes is the most boring, dorky man in town. He has problems in his



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job, his love life, and everything else! However, his unsuccessful life changes when he meets Fox, a sexy member of the Fraternity, who adopts him into the organization. She helps him get revenge on his father's murderer. The group's leader, Sloan, teaches Wes lightning-quick reflexes, phenomenal agility, and incredible strength. However, Wes soon discovers that the Fraternity members are merely agents of fate, and he discovers that his destiny is in his own hands.

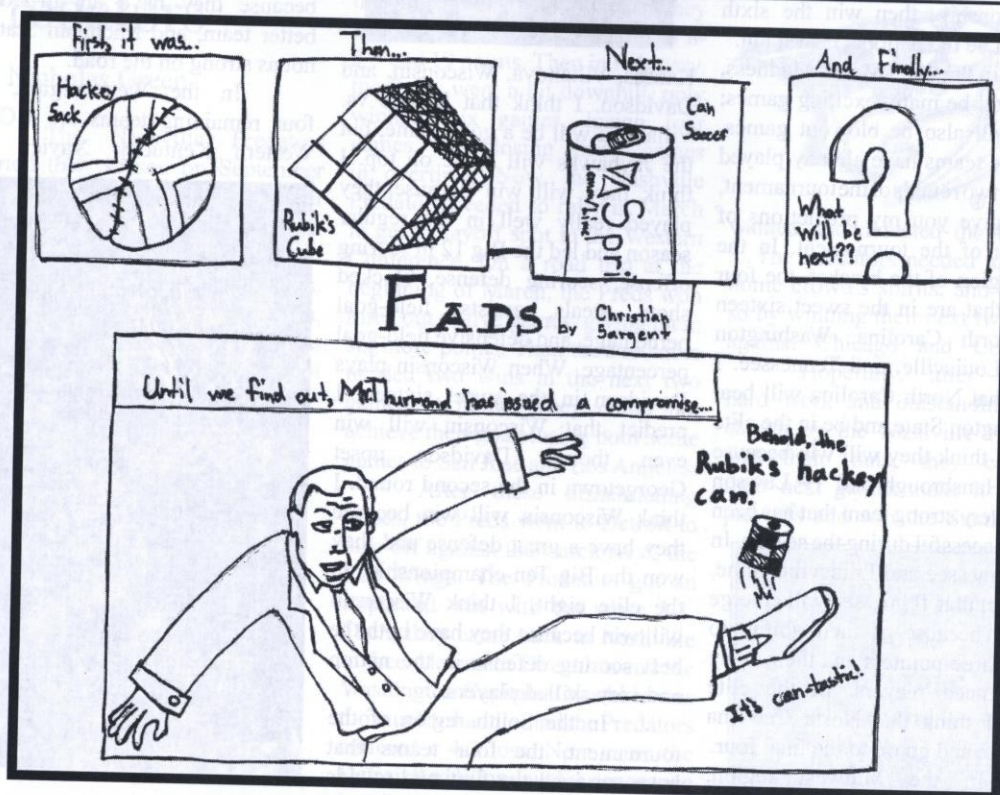


Hancock

Wednesday, July 2

Starring Will Smith

Hancock is a superhero with the ability to fly. He performs many "good" deeds in downtown L.A., but his acts leave incredible damage in their wake. However, Hancock isn't the kind of guy who cares what other people think until he saves PR executive, Ray Embrey. With that meeting, Hancock realizes that he is actually vulnerable--his biggest challenge yet.



SPORTS

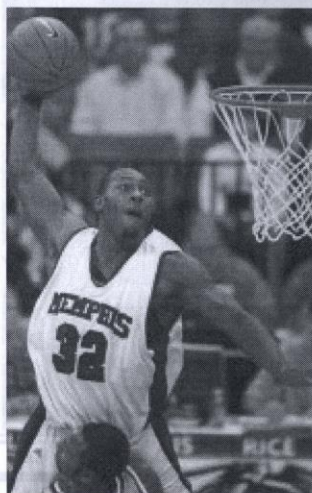
March Madness

by Will Peffen

All sports fans look forward to March Madness, which consists of 65 teams with one dream: to win the tournament and become the best team in the country. The bracket consists of four sections, each with sixteen teams. Each team is required to win five games to get to the championship, then win the sixth game to be the national champion.

In the 2008 March Madness, there will be many exciting games; there will also be blowout games. Because teams have already played the first two rounds of the tournament, I will give you my predictions of the rest of the tournament. In the East region of the bracket, the four teams that are in the sweet sixteen are North Carolina, Washington State, Louisville, and Tennessee. I think that North Carolina will beat Washington State and be in the elite eight. I think they will win because Tyler Hansbrough and Ty Lawson lead a very strong team that has been very successful during the season. In the Tennessee and Louisville game, I predict that Tennessee will emerge on top because of their ability to shoot three-pointers and their many experienced players. In the elite eight, I think that North Carolina will win and go on to the final four.

In the Midwest region, the four teams that remain are

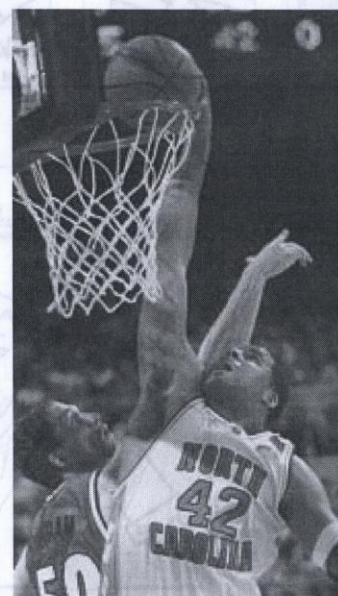


Kansas, Villanova, Wisconsin, and Davidson. I think that Kansas vs. Villanova will be a good game, but the Jayhawks will come on top. I think they will win because they played really well in the regular season and led the Big 12 in scoring offense, scoring defense, blocked shots, steals, assists, field-goal percentage, and defensive field-goal percentage. When Wisconsin plays Davidson in the sweet sixteen, I predict that Wisconsin will win even though Davidson upset Georgetown in the second round. I think Wisconsin will win because they have a great defense and they won the Big Ten championship. In the elite eight, I think Wisconsin will win because they have both the best scoring defense in the nation and very skilled players.

In the South region of the tournament, the four teams that have survived the first two rounds are Memphis, Michigan State,

Stanford, and Texas. When Memphis and Michigan State play in the sweet sixteen, I predict a Michigan State victory. I think they will win because Memphis is in a conference that is not very strong and because Michigan State is a strong offensive team. I predict that when Stanford and Texas square off, Texas will win a close game because they have two very talented guards, D.J. Augustine and A.J. Abrams, and they have beaten Tennessee and UCLA, who are also big contenders in the tournament. In the elite eight, I think that Texas will beat Michigan State because they have an all-around better team, and Michigan State is not as strong on the road.

In the West region, the four remaining teams are UCLA, Western Kentucky, Xavier, and



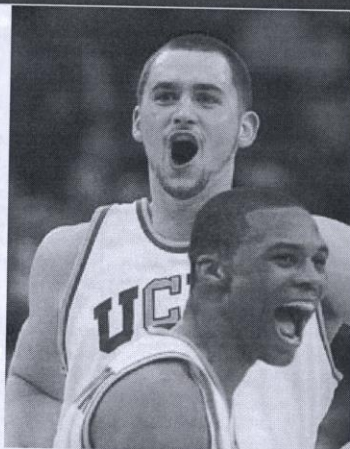
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West Virginia. In the UCLA and Western Kentucky game, I think UCLA will win because of their freshman Kevin Love, who has had a great season, and Darren Collison, who was hurt early in the season but came back and has done well. I predict that when Xavier and West Virginia play for the elite eight, Xavier will win the game because they are playing one of their best seasons in the school's history, and they won the A-10 tournament. I think that UCLA will beat Xavier because of their great teamwork and



ability to win games.

In the Final Four, my prediction is that North Carolina will beat Wisconsin because of their outstanding players and experience in the Final Four. I predict that UCLA will win over Texas even though they lost to them in the regular season. In the national championship I pick North Carolina over UCLA because they are a more experienced team and have more players that can make extraordinary plays.

Predators

by Nicholas Green

The Nashville Predators started their season on September 16, 2007, with a 3-1 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets at Columbus. By January, their record was 21-20-3, and they had 45 points. After this poor start for the season, the Predators needed more points to come out of January. The Preds got



the points they needed when they finished January with a record of 8-3-3 and 19 points. Then in February, the Preds went a bit downhill, only winning six games, losing four games, and losing three games in overtime. Now, the Nashville Predators needed to rally in March to get a playoff spot in the Western Conference. On a road trip at the beginning of March, the Preds won three out of five games, giving them six more points. Then the Predators needed two wins in the next two games at home. They could not achieve their goal, losing both home games to San Jose and Los Angeles.

After these disheartening losses, the Preds went to Detroit to face off against their arch rival, the Red Wings. The Predators got an important win with the score 3-1. Then, they came back to Nashville to face Alexander Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals. Ovechkin was too much to handle, and the Predators suffered a 4-2 loss. Next came the Detroit Red Wings out for vengeance in Nashville. They got what they

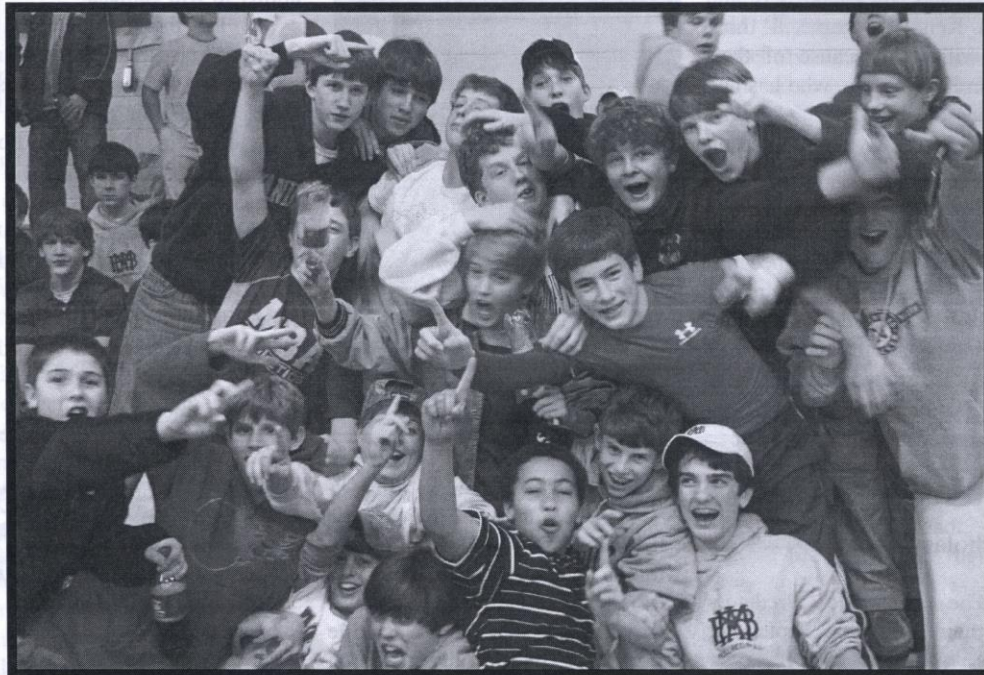


wanted and defeated the Preds 6-3. The Predators needed to lift the home crowd's spirits, and they did so by winning their next two games against Chicago and Columbus.

Hopefully, after all the hard work and outstanding effort shown by the Nashville Predators and their fans, they can win their next games make it into the playoffs and win the Stanley Cup.

**Full Spring
Sports
Coverage
in the
next issue of
*Top of the Hill***

THE BACK PAGE



Microbes show their support in the HVAC Championship basketball game!

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